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ABSTRACT

This report by the Danish Ministry of Education begins with an outline of the Danish education system. The report generally discusses primary and lower secondary education, general upper secondary education, vocational education, and higher education before beginning more in-depth reports. The education system is undergoing constant changes due to the changes in Danish society. The government aims to maintain a high level of flexibility in order for the system to be able to adapt to changes and new goals, and to ensure a high level of educational standards in the population. The remainder of the report is divided into 2 sections. The first section is on the development in the individual major sectors from 1990-92. This section discusses the "folkeskole" or municipal primary and lower secondary school; the gymnasium or upper secondary school; vocational education and training; teacher training; the combined kindergarten, recreation center, and socio-educational teacher training program; and higher education. The second section discusses transversal initiatives including free institutions, open education, educational support, and international activities. (DK)

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Development of Education 1990 - 1992

Denmark

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1992

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Education In Denmark

National Report

43nd International Conference of Education
Geneva 14 - 19 September 1992

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National Report of Denmark

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Main Outline of the Education System

The Danish education system is undergoing constant changes due to the changes in the Danish society. It is the aim of the Danish Government to maintain a high level of flexibility in order for the system to be able to adapt to changes and new goals and to ensure a high level of educational standards in the population so that it will meet the demands of the ever changing society and further its growth.

The education policy plays an important role in the efforts to promote growth in production and employment, increase the competitive power and improve the balance of payment of the country.

The active population (i.e. work-force) must possess knowledge and skills that allow them to adjust to new technology, changed production processes and new market conditions. The education system must thus be capable of renewing itself regularly with a view to adjusting to the requirements which international competition poses to a modern society in a global perspective.

In the past few years, comprehensive reforms have been implemented with a view to modernizing the courses of education, to granting a greater freedom to the educational institutions, and to obtaining a more efficient financial administration of education and training.

However, each educational reform has been characterised by preserving the fundamental qualities and elements of past systems that all parties have agreed have proven their right.

Primary and Lower Secondary Education

In Denmark, education is compulsory for 9 years with a voluntary 1year preschool class and a voluntary 10th school

year. At present, approx. 650,000 children attend this level of education.

The children start school proper when they are 6-7 years old. Parents have a free choice between the municipal school (the Folkeskole), where teaching is free, and the private elementary schools, where 20 per cent of the tuition fees are paid by parents. Approx. 90 per cent of the children attend the municipal school and 10 per cent the private elementary schools.

The pupils stay together throughout their entire school career. In the 8th to 10th forms, they may however choose an extended syllabus in a number of subjects. On completion of the 9th and 10th forms, the pupils may choose to sit for final examinations in the main subjects.

The Ministry of Education issues guidelines to the teaching in the individual subjects. Subsequently it is up to the individual school to work out a curriculum which is binding for the teachers. The teachers enjoy great freedom with regard to the planning and organization of their work within this framework.

The maximum teacher/pupil ratio is 1/28. The average ratio is 1/19.

General Upper Secondary Education

Upon completion of the 9th or 10th year of the Folkeskole, young people have the option of attending the 3 year general and academically oriented education offered by the Gymnasium (upper secondary school) which is completed by the Studentereksamen (upper secondary school leaving examination), and which qualifies for admission to higher education. Approx. 1/3 of the young people opt for this course after having been found qualified by their Folkeskole.

The Gymnasium comprises a mathematics and a languages line. In addition to the subjects of the two lines, students must choose to study another 3-4 elective subjects.

The majority of the Gymnasia are run and funded by the counties. There are however a number of private Gymnasia, with an enrolment of roughly 6 per cent of the students. They are governed by private boards and receive State grants which cover most of the operational expenditure of the schools. The average number of students per class is 25.

The 2-year Higher Preparatory Examination, the HF, also qualifies for admission to higher education. In order to be admitted to this course, the students must have taken the leaving examinations from the 10th form of the Folkeskole. The subjects are divided into common core subjects and elective subjects.

Vocational Education

More than half of a youth cohort enroll in a vocational education and training course. There is a wide range of specializations in the different main vocational fields.

The Danish Parliament lays down the overall framework of these courses which are organized in close cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the labour market parties.

The courses consist of a combination of practical training in a firm and theoretical and practical training at a school. In addition to the actual vocational subjects, general subjects are also taught. The courses normally last between 2 and 4 years. The period spent at school varies between 6 months and 2 years.

Next to the above basic vocational education and training courses, there are the higher commercial examination and the higher technical examination courses which are purely

schoolbased courses completed by an examination, and which qualify for admission to higher education.

The advanced technical and commercial courses mainly assume the completion of a basic vocational education and training course and are primarily theoretical courses of a duration of 1 to 3 years.

All these courses are meant to prepare their students for participation in production, marketing, service and other activities. The courses are well-represented throughout the country, and they provide national qualifications.

Higher Education

Over 15 per cent of a youth cohort enroll in higher education courses.

There are 5 traditional universities and a number of institutions offering specialized university level education, e.g. the Technical University of Denmark, the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, the Business Schools etc. All in all there are over 17 university-level institutions in Denmark. Furthermore, there is a wide range of institutions offering short and medium cycle non-university higher education, e.g. engineering colleges, teacher training colleges, schools of occupational and physiotherapy etc.

The State finances the operation of the higher education institutions.

The universities offer a wide range of study programmes leading to Bachelor's and Master's degrees. On completion of a Master's degree course, graduates may pursue their studies for the Ph.D.-degree. In addition to these degrees, there is the Danish Doctoral Degree which is awarded after an academic evaluation by specialists and public defence of a scholarly thesis which is often the result of many years of in depth research into the subject.

The universities and other institutions of higher education enjoy comprehensive autonomy, in that professors, students and technical and administrative staff occupy the seats in the governing boards of the institutions.

Most of the medium-cycle higher education courses take place at other educational institutions. These courses normally last 3 or 4 years leading to qualifications such as preschool and primary and lower secondary school teacher, social worker, physiotherapist, etc.

Development of Education in Denmark 1990 - 1992

In the parliamentary sessions of 1990-91 and 1991-92, the Parliament passed comparatively fewer acts in the field of education than in the previous years. This must however be seen in the light of the large-scale reforms which have been implemented in recent years in almost all areas of education. Apart from a number of central legislative initiatives, several innovations have however been carried out in a number of areas in the period 1990-92.

In the following, we will mention on the one hand the more important innovations which have been carried out in the period 1990-92 within the individual major sectors (section 1) and on the other hand innovations of a more transversal nature (section 2).

1. THE DEVELOPMENT IN THE INDIVIDUAL MAJOR SECTORS, 1990-92

1.1. The Folkeskole (municipal primary and lower secondary school)

The 4-year innovation programme of the Folkeskole will be completed at the end of the school year 1991-92. Approx. 8,000 innovation projects have been carried out in the Danish municipal primary and lower secondary schools, and these projects have contributed to a development of the framework and content of the Folkeskole. The programme has been evaluated in 25 final reports which will be used in the political considerations about the future structure of the Folkeskole. The Government is expected to reintroduce a

bill on the Folkeskole in the coming parliamentary session 1992-93.

A political decision has been taken to the effect that the responsibility for the teachers of the Folkeskole when it comes to contract matters will be transferred from the State to the municipalities as from April 1993. This means that the municipalities will act as an employer and will thus have the possiblity to enter into agreements on wage and employment conditions and they will at the same time also finance future pension expenditures for the teachers.

Through a change in the legislation adopted in 1991, the free elementary schools have been given a new grant-awarding system. A coupling was thus made between the expenditure level of the free elementary schools and that of the municipal primary and lower secondary schools. At the same time, the new act led to a number of administrative simplifications.

1.2. The Gymnasium (upper secondary school) etc.

The regulations pertaining to the awarding of grants to private Gymnasia, adult upper secondary level/higher preparatory examination courses have been changed so that they correspond as far as possible to the regulations pertaining to the private elementary schools. In the annual Budgets, the average grant per pupil is fixed as a percentage of the average expenditure at the county schools.

The change, which is expenditure-neutral, implies a division of the grant so that one part is given as an institutional grant independent on the size of the institution and another part is given as identical grants per pupil independent of the size of the school. A certain redistribution between large and small schools is thus maintained.

1.3. Vocational education and training

The comprehensive reform of vocational education and training came into force in 1991. The reform entailed that approx. 300 different courses and course orientations were merged into a new and more simplified structure. At the same time, the courses were structured as one-stranded courses with two ways of entry (through practical training periods in a business entreprise or a school period, respectively).

In order to remedy the shortage of practical training places, compensatory workshop training has been organized at the vocational schools. Such compensatory training will replace the ordinary practical training periods in business enterprises for those young people who have not managed to find a practical training place. This scheme is funded through contributions from the employers.

This initiative has subsequently been combined with the possibility that practical training abroad may form part of a vocational education and training course. It is thus possible for students to combine school periods in Denmark with practical training abroad. Through contributions from the employers, financial grants are allocated with a view to covering the additional expenditure incurred in connection with practical training periods spent in EC and EFTA-countries.

A number of Danish students are for the time being carrying through their practical training in Germany in accordance with these regulations.

The courses in agriculture have been transferred from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs to the Ministry of Education, and the agricultural schools have been given the status of vocational schools.

The area has to a great extent maintained its characteristic features, including the boarding school facility, but is subject to the same conditions as the vocational schools when it comes to the grant-awarding system. The basic course for farmers will as the other youth education courses build upon the 9th or 10th form levels of the Folkeskole.

1.4. Teacher training

On the basis of work carried out by a special committee, a new act on teacher training was passed during the parliamentary session of 1990/91 resulting in a renewal of the content of the study programme.

The teacher training programme for Folkeskole teachers is now divided into a 1st part with a broad common course and a 2nd part with a concentration on the main subjects.

The governing boards of the colleges of education have moreover been given extensive economic and pedagogic responsibility, and at the same time governing boards have also been introduced at the State colleges.

1.5. *The* combined kindergarten, recreation centre and socio-educational teacher training programme

The former kindergarten, recreation centre and socio-educational teacher training programmes have been merged into one coherent course without any division into different branches. Through the choice of teaching practice place and educational specialization, the students can specialize in special pedagogical work areas.

The responsibility for the provision of teaching practice places to the students rests with the counties and

municipalities, and the State colleges now have governing boards just like the private colleges.

1.6. Higher education

A political agreement has been struck which lays down a framework of 41,000 study places in higher education in the coming 4-year period. The agreement builds on a more and more free intake to most study programmes on the basis of relevant admission requirements in the form of subject-related qualifications to all study programmes.

An independent quality assessment centre has been established for a 5-year pilot period with a view to strengthening the assessment of the quality of universities and other academic higher education institutions. Systematic evaluations are to be carried out, and national and international experience with evaluation in education is to be collected.

One of the first tasks of the centre will be to analyse the study programmes in psychology.

In the parliamentary session of 1992-93, the Government is expected to present a bill regarding the administration of the higher education institutions.

The Act on the Administration of the Institutions of Higher Education is to be amended as per a political agreement representing a large majority in Parliament. The contents of the amendment aim at a strengthened, unequivocal and personalized management authority, involving, in consequence, an extensive decentralization of authority from Ministry to institutions. A new economics administration model is proposed. The activities of the collegiate bodies will be changed, and Governing Body and faculty councils will get members from the outside. The bill will be

circulated for comments with a view to legislation during the next session.

2. TRANSVERSAL INITIATIVES

2.1. Free institutions

As an element of the Government's free institution project, Denmark's edp-centre for research and education (UNI·C), Aarhus Commercial School and Aarhus Technical School now have the opportunity for increased autonomy over a 4-year period.

The agreement implies that the institutions shall increase their productivity. In return, they will be given a greater degree of freedom in relation to the central authorities, so that they can to a great extent decide themselves how they will reach the target.

The Royal Danish School of Educational Studies and the Royal Danish Veterinary and Agricultural University have furthermore become recognized as free institutions - until further notice for a 5-year period.

2.2. Open education

The open education scheme provides an offer of course modules for part-time students against a certain user payment. It is thus possible for people who already have a job to pursue studies within individual selected areas parallel to their job and outside working hours.

Open education is now characterized both by a free supply and a free intake. This means that it is up to the individual educational institution to decide on the one hand what it wants to offer under the open education scheme and on the other hand how many students it wants to admit.

2.3. Educational support

A number of legislative changes have simplified the regulations regarding the granting of educational support. Among the more promising ones, we may mention that the students' possibility of taking State educational support with them for studies abroad has been liberalized. The changes will take effect from the end of 1992.

2.4. International activities

The educational cooperation with Eastern Europe and in particular with the Baltic countries has been extended - at minister level, through educational and research contracts between institutions, business enterprises, researchers and civil servants. The contacts via the EC are also being strengthened.

As an example to this effect we may mention that for the time being work is being done to establish a new Estonian vocational school with a commercial school and a graphic workshop according to Danish educational principles.

At the same time, 3 Danish lecturers have been appointed at the Baltic universities as an element in the efforts to link the Baltic states and Denmark closer together in a cultural and educational respect.

Under the auspices of the EC, a new and large-scale development project for apprentices has been initiated, in which Denmark is also involved.